

## **SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Lee Fox, Chairman*

*Jack Cogswell*

*William Connors*

*Jeff Heller*

*Rachel Spector*

*David Turgeon*

The SWD/RAC provides citizen input regarding the Town's trash disposal and recycling programs to the Department of Public Works, which operates the Recycling and Transfer Station, and to the Board of Selectmen and to Town Meeting. The Committee was reauthorized by Town Meeting, Article 63 (ATM, May 2005). Each year we review the sources and uses of funds for the RTS Enterprise Fund and recommend fee changes to the Board of Selectmen, if required. Other activities and accomplishments for FY05 are summarized below.

Our members are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen; we now have six members with an opening for 1 additional member. We meet monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday evening of the month at 7:30 pm at the Pollard Media Center (Inner) and the public is invited to attend our meetings.

- Trash disposal contract renewal: On June 30, 2008, our 20-year contract for waste disposal service with Wheelabrator Energy Systems (WES) in Millbury will end. The Committee intends to make a recommendation to Town Meeting regarding acceptance of the contract renewal offer or disposal by some other means. As input, the Committee recommended that the Town join into a compact with the other 35 towns that now have long-term contracts with WES to review the market conditions and options available for trash disposal other than incineration at WES. A consultant was retained to perform this work and his report will be released after receipt of the contract offer. Prior to June 1, 2006, the Town must respond to the WES offer; the Committee intends to hold public meeting(s) to educate interested members of the community and to solicit comments from the public. We will recommend action – acceptance of the contract offer or an alternative plan for trash disposal service – at the Annual Town Meeting in May, 2006.

We anticipate that market conditions will allow us to reduce our cost of trash disposal by at least 30% or \$28 per ton starting in July, 2008.

- Policy recommendation regarding public support for RTS Enterprise Fund (RTS/EF): The Committee was asked to recommend a policy regarding continuation of public support for the RTS Enterprise Fund. The Committee recommended that the RTS/EF be 100% supported by user fees instead of continuing the current practice of mixed funding. In FY05, 63% of the cost of the RTS Enterprise operation was met by user fees; a subsidy from the General Fund in the amount of \$670,000 made up the balance.

This new policy will have the following effect of the users. First, the Town now makes no payments to the RTS/EF based on its use of the RTS for disposal of trash or

recyclables and for other services that the Town receives from the RTS such as reprocessing of yard waste to loam and storage and reprocessing of construction debris for the DPW and for snow disposal, services that would have cost \$418,000 (average for preceding 3 years) had those services been purchased from commercial sources. The Committee recommends that the Town pay for those services. To avoid the extensive accounting cost and budget uncertainty, we further recommend that the Town's payment be calculated based on the average of the prior 3 years' use of RTS services.

The effect of this policy on user fees for yellow bags and stickers will be modest increases in the fees of less than 5-10% over the next 2 or 3 years as this policy is fully implemented.

The RTS scale rate is set at a level that is competitive with the scale rates of the nearby transfer stations. We expect the scale rates to increase by up to \$5/ton per year.

Our complete report is available at the RTS website at:  
<http://www.town.needham.ma.us/DPW/RTS/DPWRTSHomePage.htm>

- Trash/recyclables survey of schools: The Town received a Technical Assistance Grant from MA DEP in October, 2004 to study the generation rate and handling of trash and recyclables in the Needham public schools. This information is summarized below and will be used both as a baseline for measurement of improved environmental performance and as the basis for our contract for waste disposal services for the schools. The full report is available at:  
<http://www.town.needham.ma.us/DPW/RTS/DPWRTSHomePage.htm>

The key finding was that we could reduce the weight of trash disposal by 10 to 20% if half of the waste paper were recycled; at present, only 5-10% of the recyclable paper is being recycled.

- Increase in contract rate for sale of recycled paper: We have renegotiated our contract with our paper recycler and he now pays us \$10 per ton of paper recycled. In the past, both paper and commingled containers were recycled at no net cost or revenue to the Town. We continue to recycle our commingled containers at no net cost or revenue. This change produced revenue for the RTS/EF of \$34,624 in FY05.
- The RTS continues to expand its yard waste activity to include sale of both compost and loam to the public as well as to landscaping contractors. It generated \$32,048 of revenue in FY05 to help support the operating costs of the RTS.
- The RTS continues to rent out its trommel screener and wood waste processor to other towns in the area. In addition to paying for the maintenance of this equipment, that activity generated \$34,242 of revenue for FY05 to help support the operating costs of the RTS.

- Thanks to the effort of the RTS users, the recycling level has increased from 40.30% of Needham's trash (exclusive of yard waste and construction debris) to 41.57% in FY05, reducing the amount that has to be hauled to Wheelabrator and burned at a significant cost to the users.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge and thank Chip Laffey, Superintendent of the RTS, for his active and effective management of the facility. Under his leadership and through his initiative, the RTS/EF earned more than \$180,000 in FY05 from non-Needham sources, making it possible NOT to raise fees for the average household by more than 20%.